

# “...How can I refuse?”

## Rafi's

Rafi saab disliked publicity. During a wedding, he'd go up to the bridal couple and after wishing them warmly, he'd walk back to the car and we would drive home. All his interviews were done by his elder brother Abdul Amin with whom he would sit late the previous night, explaining his answers.

**H**e would wake up every day at 3 a. m. After about two- and-a-half-hours of riyaz, he'd go off for a game of badminton. If he happened to have a half-hour break between recordings, he would rush home, run up to the terrace and start flying his kites. He'd sulk like a baby if his kites were cut!

Rafi saab's greatness lay in his humble attitude towards people. He was very religious and never forgot to thank Allah for what he had become and achieved. If someone told him, 'Rafi saab you sang so well that the movie is a hit, and the hero has hit big-time,' he'd answer 'If it wasn't for the music director or that hero, I wouldn't be singing that song.'

He loved his song 'Suhani raat dhal chuki...' from *Dulari* and there were other favourites too. After his recording, he'd gather the children, bring out the harmonium and sing the song, especially when he was happy. God knows what he liked about it, but he saw *Sholay* thrice.

He had a special liking for Shammiji and Dharamji. I am proud to say that there is no film industry person who didn't love my husband. He never spoke a word against anyone.

I spent 35 of the most wonderful years of my life with Rafi saab - before he passed away on July 31, 1980. It was before his 54<sup>th</sup> birthday. I

remember it all so clearly... He had been requested to do a Bengali recording for a Kali pooja album. He told me, 'I am tired. I don't think I'll be able to sing this Bengali song.' So I told him to tell the party to take on another singer. 'No, no they are coming all the way from Calcutta in the hope that I'll agree. I'll do it this year - how can I refuse?'

The next day, he sat for rehearsals from 9:30 a. m. He was in pain but he refused to tell us anything till 12:30 in the afternoon. He was in a lot of pain and was sweating profusely. It was also the month of Ramzan, so he was hungry. His hands and feet were yellow. The doctors asked us to shift him to a hospital, explaining that Rafi saab had suffered a very major heart attack. The end came soon after...

Today there are moments when I wish I were 13 years old again and Rafi saab 19... (that's when we got married). There are times I wish he'd come to me like he would nearly every evening, sit beside me and ask, 'Wh it is troubling you? Tell me your troubles and they'll all go away.'

★ Compiled by Manisha Almadi



UNFORGETTABLE

**Mohammad Rafi** - the name says it all...A jewel in the crown of Indian cinema's legendary playback singers. He created hysteria in music circles with films like *Kohinoor* and *Baiju Bawra*, following it up with being the voice for all top actors in the '60s. A simple honest person, Rafi was a perfectionist who infused life and authenticity into all his songs whether they were exuberant rock and roll numbers or sad love ballads. More than twenty years after his demise, his wife sheds light on the man behind that stupendous voice.

**R**afi saab had been singing since the age of 10 and was a household name when I married him. A simple human being, his life revolved around his seven children. His was a routine home-to-recording-and-back-home schedule. The kids adored their father and were very proud of him. However, they hated going for movies with their Abba because he insisted on entering after the film began and would hustle them out before it ended. The kids could never see the beginning and the climax!



When legends speak,  
the world listens...  
Om Puri in 'Biographics', presents  
one of the most respected names  
in Indian cinema

Mohammed Rafi,  
Singer, Genius.  
At 8.30 p.m. March 27.



WHERE YOUR HEROES BELONG